TRUTH ETERNAL

An abridged version
of one of the discourses of
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Punjab, India

Published by

S.L. Sondhi, Secretary
Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Punjab, India

1st Edition–1977–10,000 Copies
2nd Edition–1979–15,000 Copies

Printed at Rekha Printers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi-110020.

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1. All treasure is within thy home[1],
There is naught without.
Thou shalt attain it through Guru's grace,
When thy inner door is opened.

2. O brother, through Guru alone
Dost thou gain Him!
The treasure of Nam[2] is within thee,
Through true Guru is it revealed.

3. Only the real seeker of the Lord
Attains and possesses this treasure.
He opens the divine eye within,
And beholds the source of redemption.

4. Many are the mansions within,
Wherein the soul dwelleth.
It wins the most cherished reward
And returns not to this world.

5. Seekers who are discriminating
Have grasped through their Guru
The treasure they ever keep safe
And guard it with intense care.

6. Nam is a priceless commodity.
A rare devotee attains it.
What wilt thou gain, O brother,
By searching for it without,
When the thing is within thy home?

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[1]Body
[2]Word; Logos; Sound Current.

7. Wandering in the wide world in delusion
The manmukh[1] is confronted with disgrace.
He leaveth his own true home
And goeth to others' wrong door.
Like a thief he getteth caught,
Without Nam, he receiveth blows.

8. He alone attains peace, O brother,
Who recognizes his own home.
He realizes the Lord within.
All praise to the Master!

9. Thou Thyself bestowest Thy grace
And Thou Thyself makest one realize.
Devote thyself to Nam, O Nanak,
And thou shalt be honored in His court.

— Guru Amar Das
(From Shri Adi-Granth-P. 425)

In this short and beautiful composition, Guru Amar Das has lucidly explained the essentials of the teachings of the Saints. He tells us that God resides in our body, but it is our mind and ego which have drawn a blinding veil between us and our Creator. This veil can be lifted and pierced only with the power of Nam. He speaks of the innate urge in man to find peace and happiness in life. But where do we look for them? Our gaze invariably turns to the allurements of this world. And the more we try to find peace and happiness

[1] Literally, one whose face is turned towards his mind; a worldly man.

in the shapes and forms of this material world, the deeper we sink in the mire and the greater is our misery. By their very nature, the things which we seek are transient. Consequently, the pleasure derived from them is invariably short-lived. In course of time, all such pleasures of this world, of mind and matter, change their hue and ripen into pain.

Marriage is a happy and festive event in our life, but if our partner turns out to be quarrelsome, overbearing and unaccommodating, the resulting tension and strife turns the whole household into a veritable hell. Likewise, a new arrival in the family is an occasion of great rejoicing; parties are thrown to entertain friends and relatives and alms are given to the poor. Yet, as experience shows, often the same off-spring becomes a source of despair if the child falls ill, if he turns out to be a prodigal or if he is called back by the Lord.

Again, people sometimes seek peace and happiness in offices of power and authority. When riding on the crest, political leaders get acclaim and respect. Processions are taken out in their honor. Their praises are sung in the press and from the platform alike, and they feel at the top of the world. But we also know what happens when power slips from their hands. The same leaders then face disgrace and dishonor from the same people. Often they become even targets of bullets, or are put behind bars. Their very name becomes an anathema and they are humbled and humiliated in every way. Thus, the very places of power and status, which at one time were the fountains of pleasure and happiness

for them, change into infernos of death and destruction.

By far, the largest number of people look for happiness and peace in amassing wealth. They toil day and night and sacrifice many a principle in this ignoble pursuit. But soon they are disillusioned to find that riches and happiness are not synonymous. Stark misery stares them in the face when this pile starts shrinking, for money soon begins to slide into the doctor's pocket for treatments of all kinds of ailments, or into the lawyer's purse when they get involved in prolonged and expensive litigation. They become physical wrecks in the bargain.

Then again, some seek pleasure in wine and whiskey, and in eating the flesh of animals, fish and fowl. These things may give them the pleasure of the palate; they may appear to be rich and savory, but quite often they also land them in hospitals and nursing homes, sometimes even in prison cells, entailing hard labor.

The question naturally arises as to why peace and happiness are so elusive in this world. God has made the texture of this world from the warp and woof of joy and sorrow. In this "vale of tears," where every rose has a thorn, every pleasure is tinged with pain, none can claim to have tasted only unalloyed pleasure, nor would you meet one whose lot has been unrelieved pain. There are patches of shade and light in every life. Days of pleasure may be followed by a gloom of despair, nights of misery may end in a rosy dawn. We owe our moments of peace and pleasure in this world to our

good deeds of past lives, and all the pains and sorrows which afflict us are visible results of our past bad deeds.

Sages and seers have called this world the "Field of Karmas," for here we have to reap what we have sown. Crops of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow grow strictly according to seeds of good and bad karmas. If we sow seeds of pepper, we shall harvest pepper. If we plant mangoes, we are entitled to enjoy the taste of mangoes. While encased in this human frame, if we perform good actions, we will come back to collect our reward and if we perform bad ones, we will return to suffer their consequences. Neither through good deeds, nor through bad ones, can we obtain release from this eternal cycle of birth and death — the wheel of life.

What is the merit of good deeds? Untold wealth, kingly robes, leadership of nations or headship of religions. Iron fetters give way to gold ones, constantly keeping us bound hand and foot to this world. From a hut, our habitat is shifted to a palace. We shed the broomstick to hold the reins of government. At best, we get entitled, essentially for a limited period, to a place in paradise or heaven, which again is a karmic region within the domain of mind and matter. After exhausting the fruits of our good and noble deeds, we return to this prison of the "eighty-four.[1]" Likewise, bad deeds may land us in hell, and thereafter, again the prison of the "eighty-four" is ready to receive us.

Everybody in this world, king or commoner, rich or poor, man or woman, is rendering his or her account of past karmas and these very karmas determine for us our

[1] 8,400,000 species in creation.

form, our place and position of birth, as well as our station in life. In whatever form we are encased, we go through a long chain of suffering and misery, pain and sorrow. Whatever the status given to us at birth, there is no peace or respite anywhere.

If this is the fate of man in this world, the position of the lower species can better be imagined than described. One shudders to think of their lot. Man is considered as the "top of the creation" and made in the image of his Maker. Yet no one, even in this coveted form, can claim to be happy and contented. Some are dogged by illness, others by the curse of unemployment. Some are denied the privilege of parenthood and they yearn for a child day and night. Others have children who cause them endless worry and misery. Some are worried because they cannot secure a loan, others because they cannot square one. We daily witness the sorry spectacle of beggars and destitutes clamoring for alms by the roadside. We have only to visit a hospital to hear the doleful cries of patients writhing in agony, or a jail to listen to the tales of woe and distress of the unfortunate inmates.

Look where we will, we find nothing but pain and suffering in this world. Almost every day, the radio and the morning paper carry news of international conflicts, political upheavals and religious strife. All these sorrowful incidents leave a trail of misery behind, with so many widows crying for their husbands, and orphans for their parents. In a world where people cannot get even the barest necessities of life, like food and clothing, how can we expect peace and happiness to fall to our lot?

Next, take the case of an individual on whom God has bestowed His gifts rather lavishly, an affectionate and noble life-companion, robust health, enviable name and fame, plenty of wealth and other material possessions, well-behaved children — in short, everything under the sun. Even such a one, sitting in solitude all by himself, is, at times, overwhelmed by a sense of loneliness, a feeling of emptiness, of something missing, something vitally lacking, disturbing the placidity of his mind in the midst of plenty. He cannot even fathom what he is missing. When God has been so generous with His gifts, why this sense of isolation, this turmoil in the mind? There is no ready answer to these queries. The more he thinks, the more baffled he is.

It is the innate longing of the soul for its long-lost home, for its source, for its real self, so to say, which is the cause of the turmoil. As long as we do not let the soul progress on the Path to its home, there can never be any peace and contentment in the real sense. That is why masters inspire us to seek our Creator through love and devotion. "Peace and bliss are the share of such alone, as have realized their Eternal Home," says Guru Nanak.

Which is our Real Home? It is the home where God resides, the abode of the Lord himself. It is only when the soul unites with the Lord that we can win eternal bliss. To a limited extent, however, the material comforts and objects of this world can also be a source of happiness and pleasure for us, provided we are attuned to the will of the Lord and are completely absorbed in His love and devotion.

This point can best be illustrated by the example of a child who feels delighted and thrilled going round a fair while holding the hand of his father. Everything looks charming and beautiful to him. There are shops full of toys and stalls displaying a variety of tasty and tempting sweets. He is immensely pleased with them all and naturally feels that all his joy is emanating from the objects and sights around him. But imagine his plight when by the push or pull of the crowd, or under the stress of his own excitement, he lets go his father's hand. He is now a picture of misery, wailing and crying at his loudest. The very shops and the sights and sounds of the fair which earlier captivated him are all there, but he has no eyes and ears for them any more. The child now realizes that without the hold of his father's hand, all the attractions of the fair have lost their fascination and charm for him. Our plight in this world is no different.

Our Father is the immortal Creator, who is remembered by His creatures through thousands of different names given to Him out of love and devotion — God, Allah, Ram, Wahi-guru, Parmatma or Ishwar. So long as our soul is not dyed in His love and devotion, so long as we do not learn to lean on Him, real peace and happiness in this world will forever remain an elusive dream.

Saints do not appear in this world to convert it into a valley of peace and joy. If this had been their mission, surely the world would have become a paradise on earth by now, because in every nation, in every religion, in every country and in every age, masters and teachers

of the highest order have been appearing and showing the Path. History is replete with their stories. Glories of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Kabir, Nanak, Tulsi Sahib and Swami Ji Maharaj, along with so many other sages of India and other countries have been sung down the line. If, in spite of them, the world has remained what it is, it will be too presumptuous on our part to imagine that we can now change it into a heaven on earth.

Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh used to point out that with the best of will and effort, the world cannot be rid of its thorns. If, however, we were to put on strong shoes, the thorns would become completely innocuous. Problems of this world will always remain. Saints and masters, however, show us the Path and give us practical guidance, following which we can rise above the sphere of matter and mind to a region where pain and pleasure fail to touch us.

It is never the intention of these saints and masters to found any new religion or creed. Nor are their teachings meant to breed discord, strife or conflict. On the contrary, the sole purpose of their sojourn amongst us is to create in us the yearning to know God, to seek release from worldly ties and, by freeing the soul from the shackles of the body, enable us to re-enter our real Home and re-unite with our Creator.

What generally happens, however, is that after the departure of these Beloveds of God from this world, we externalize their spiritual teachings and get ourselves involved in empty rituals. We forget the essence of their

message. Instead, we begin to circumscribe their lofty teachings into narrow grooves of creeds and sects, thereby sowing seeds of discord and dissension. Why do we do so? Some do it out of selfishness and greed, others out of false notions, still others to win fame and popularity. Indeed, what greater injustice could we do to these great saviors than to mis-interpret their noble teachings of universal import and freeze them into narrow limits of regions and religions, castes and creeds.

If we carefully study the purely spiritual content of their message with an unbiased mind, we come to the irresistible conclusion that all saints and masters enunciate the same truth, to seek the Lord within and worship Him with true devotion, if we long for permanent peace and everlasting happiness. Our soul is of the essence of the Lord. We are drops of the vast ocean of divinity.

We can grasp this great truth only when we imbibe the teachings of saints and acquire the ability to realize, see and know God within us. To illustrate, take the case of a banyan tree. How spacious and sprawling is this tree, but how very small is its seed! If somebody were to tell us that there lies latent, in this tiny seed, a mighty tree, we would not easily believe it. But when we plant the seed and nurture it, the small sapling that sprouts from the seed grows, in course of time, into a mighty tree. Then alone do we realize that this little seed had the huge tree in its bosom and that the tree had in it the tiny seed and many others like it.

"Only the soul united with the Lord enjoys the bliss of eternal wedlock."

That is why, in every man, there is an unending search for the Lord, an insatiable desire to meet Him and to be one with Him. But the Lord whom we seek is not to be found outside. This is the crux of the teachings of Guru Amar Das as well as of any other saint. He emphasizes that the Lord, who created everything, is Himself pervading the entire creation down to the minutest particle of sand or the smallest blade of grass. Surely, He is also present in each one of us, right within our body. If there is any laboratory, therefore, where we may carry on research to seek Him, it can be only our own body. Governed by the mind and steeped in ignorance as we are, we fail to realize this basic truth and are busy day and night looking for Him outside.

"Just as oil is in sesame seeds," says Kabir, "and fire is in flint, so does He reside in your own body, the Lord whom you seek day and night." Jesus Christ also pronounces in the Bible, "the kingdom of God is within you." That is why sages and seers of yore have called the human body "the divine form." As Christ says in the Bible, our body is the "temple of the living God," for it is within our body alone where He can be realized and experienced, where we can gain real knowledge.

One can see for himself how ignorant we worldly people are when we look for the Lord in man-made shrines instead of the temple made by God for Himself to reside in and in which He always abides. In other

words, we never attempt to go inside in search of the Lord. We spare no effort and begrudge no spending to keep our temples and mosques, our gurdwaras and churches neat and clean. We go in for marble to decorate floors and walls; incense is burnt day and night and expensive rugs are spread lavishly. We talk in hushed tones in the precincts of these holy places and we are careful not to violate their sanctity by acts of sacrilege. We assert that these places are the Lord's dwellings and, as such, their sanctity must be preserved.

But the place that the Lord has Himself built to dwell in and where He does reside, is defiled by us in a number of ways, sometimes with the flesh of dead animals and, at other times, with strong intoxicants. We corrupt the purity of this sacred body by vicious thoughts, slanderous talk and sinful deeds, and sometimes even by planning the total demolition of this temple of God. We value things made by man but show scant respect for what God Himself has built.

Very often we have to hang our heads in shame when the study of history reveals that if by any chance there appears an innocent crack in a wall of any of these man-made temples,we do not hesitate to desecrate thousands of living temples of God. How man starts hating man because of his love for brick and mortar! What barbarities he perpetrates in the name of religion! And by indulging in these insensate acts, he takes pride in calling himself a martyr and defender of the faith.

If we calmly reflect even for a moment, we will be convinced that if by killing one another in the name of

religion we could realize God, nothing would be easier and simpler. Obviously, we have not understood religion and God in a proper perspective. For, verily, those who love the Lord also love His creation. When there is only one Lord and it is He who has created all of us, when our limbs, hands, feet, ears etc., are all alike, when the same Lord dwells within all of us, and when it is in this body that we have to look for Him, we cannot but conclude that to hate a human being is to hate the Lord. If, in spite of all this, one nation despises another nation, if one religion decries another religion, then that nation or that religion is barren in its love for the Lord and is totally oblivious of reality. Says Nanak:

> "This world, and all of us in it, are created by you O Lord, and you are yourself living within each one of us. We could call a person base and evil only if there were some other God present within him or if he had been created by someone else".

We create new nations, found new religions and sects, all in the name of the saints whom we profess to follow, forgetting that the primary purpose of their teachings is to raise the level of consciousness by sowing the seed of Nam in receptive hearts, thereby bringing out the essential unity of man.

The saints advise us, therefore, that if we want to realize God, if we want to love and worship Him, we must look for Him within ourselves and nowhere else. "Lovers of the Lord search for Him within; others wander in delusion," says Guru Amar Das. Naturally,

the question now arises that if God is within our own body, which is the true temple of God, why do we not see Him? What is the obstacle in our way and how can it be removed?

"The unseen is within, and remains invisible because of the veil of ego," says Nanak, and he goes on to add that he who purges himself of ego attains salvation while living. Now what exactly is this ego? It is the ego which makes us lose ourselves in the endless strains of "me" and "mine," such as "my religion," "my property," "my children," etc. A little reflection will convince us that everything which we consider "our own," really belongs to the Lord. The feeling of "me and mine" is there because we fail to identify ourselves with the Lord and consider ourselves as separate entities.

All the time, we try to 'own' these objects of the world, forgetting that they have never been any one's 'own' nor will they ever be so in future. The more we try to possess them, the deeper grows our attachment. We become so fond of these worldly forms and shapes that we dream of them even during sleep; and at the time of death, they pass before the mind's eye like images seen on a cinema screen. As the maxim goes, "whatever we think, that we ultimately become." Our next birth is determined by the currents of thought that flit through the mind at the time of our final exit from the worldly scene.

What is it, then, which keeps on dragging us into this material encasement with all its shackles and com-

pelling constraints? The obvious reply is, that it is our love and attachment for the world and its objects. Who generates this love and attachments in us? Naturally, it is our own mind; we are all too familiar with its tricks. It is the mind that sets brother against brother, religion against religion, and nation against nation. Daylong, we are engaged in scheming to harm and injure others. Thus, it is the mind and mind alone that is responsible for all our acts of omission and commission. Until and unless we are able to subdue the mind and curb its waywardness, we cannot realize the Lord, even though He is right there within us.

> "O Nanak, he who conquers his mind, conquers the world".

Just as the soul is the essence of the Lord, the mind is the essence of Brahm and is no mean power. Its original home is Trikuti. Caught in the net of pleasures of the senses, the mind has also lost its bearings and forgotten its original home. Whatever karmas the mind impels us to do, the consequences thereof, have perforce to be suffered by the soul also; for the mind and soul are knotted together. That is why Socrates hinted: "Know thyself." In other words, before you can realize God, you must realize yourself as a drop of the Ocean, that is God. Guru Nanak says the same thing when he observes:

> "That person alone is pure who knows himself."

And when can we claim to know ourselves? When we rise above the domain of matter and mind, when the

soul is rid of its filthy coverings of karmic dross gathered by it ever since it left its original Home, when the knot of the mind and the soul is loosened, when the mind returns to its own origin in Trikuti. It is only then, that we can claim to know ourselves.

We know that water in the clouds is pure, but when it falls on the ground as rain, it gathers all kinds of impurities. It gets polluted and emits a foul odor, so much so that it begins to look upon itself as part of the dirt. It loses, so to say, its sense of being clean and pure. When, however, as a result of the heat from the sun's penetrating rays, it turns into vapor, it is purged of all the impurities and realizes in a flash that its real self is different from the dirt and the filth with which it had combined. This awareness makes it conscious of the cloud in the sky. Having regained its purity, it rises up and merges back in the cloud, its original home from which it descended on the earth.

The condition of our soul is in no way different from that of rain water. It is of the same essence as God Himself and its original home is the same as God's, but having become subservient to the mind and having been caught in the irresistible net of illusion, it has gathered dirt and dross and lost its purity down through the ages. As long as the soul does not free itself from the clutches of the mind, it cannot know its source. It is evident, therefore, that whatever technique we adopt, whatever effort we make, and whatever path we choose, must be directed towards untying the knot of the mind and the soul, thus enabling the mind to go back to Brahm, its source in Trikuti, and the soul to ascend to

higher spiritual regions.

All genuine seekers, whatever their religion, realize the importance of controlling and subduing the mind if they want to achieve any success on the spiritual path. To that end, they try diverse methods and techniques, according to their light and understanding. Some resort to austerities and repetition of holy names, some indulge in charitable deeds, others leave their hearths and homes and seek the seclusion of mountains and forests. There are still others who make endless rounds of temples, mosques and gurdwaras, and devote themselves to the study of scriptures and sacred books and listen to learned discourses. All these practices are solely directed to one end, namely, to control the mind. Some even go to extreme limits. They turn to various disciplines like Hatha Yoga to try to forcibly detach the mind from the world and its objects.

Whatever the schedule of practices, and whatever the measure of success achieved, since there is nothing to hold the attention at the other end, the mind relapses into its old habits and reverts to its old pranks as soon as an opportunity presents itself. Actually, in a violent reaction, it sometimes gets even more entangled in its attachments to the world. Guru Nanak very aptly compares the forcible control of the mind to confining a viper in a basket. Shutting the viper in the basket neither improves its temper nor blunts its fangs. It remains as furious and venomous as ever. True, while the viper is securely kept shut in the basket, we may have no fear of its venom or its bite. But, when it escapes or is let out from the basket, we shall surely

become victims of its venomous fangs. The viper cannot but be itself forever.

Likewise, we pore over our sacred books, visit holy shrines, or seek the seclusion of forests or mountains and believe that our mind has become clean and pure. The truth, however, is that the cravings and desires of the mind have only been suppressed for a while; they have not disappeared, nor have they been conquered. At the first opportunity, the mind again gets the better of us and makes us dance to its tune. In fact, we are worse off than before, certainly worse off than the man in the street. The more we suppress a thing, the more it rebounds and reacts. This is a universal law.

Guru Amar Das rightly warns us that by practicing Hatha Yoga, by austerities or forced discipline, we may obtain temporary results, but we cannot subdue the mind permanently. How shall we set about this task? We begin by studying the nature and habits of the mind. We know from experience that the mind is fond of something, but the moment we come across something better, our mind starts running after it. No object, howsoever pleasing and beautiful, no food, howsoever tasty and tempting, can hold the mind for ever. Actually, in course of time, our mind begins to loathe the very things for the possession of which we were at one time prepared to sacrifice even our lives.

What great love we have for our parents during our childhood! If the father or mother goes out even for a couple of minutes, we cry our heart out. When brothers and sisters arrive, we transfer our affection to them.

When we go to school and college, our attention and love are claimed by our friends and companions. When we get married, our wives and children monopolize our attention. As we grow old, our love takes in its fold the problems of the whole country, nation or religion. It is the same love but it has many hues and is given to many different objects at different points of time in our life.

No love or attachment with any worldly objects can capture the mind permanently. The mind loves pleasure and is always on the lookout for something better than what it has. So long as we do not provide for the mind something superior, nobler and higher than worldly love it will never be ready to give up its love for the pleasures of the world. What is that 'something' which provides the most captivating love, the most satisfying pleasure? Guru Nanak gives the right answer when he says:

> "Satiated is the mind when it tastes Nam;
> Without Nam, life is a shameful waste."

The mind, with its insatiable love for pleasure, is ever on the run, like a deer. When, however, it tastes the nectar of Nam within, it becomes free of all desires and, discarding proverbial fickleness, attains peace and contentment. That is why all saints exhort us to seek the company of the Realized Ones and through them follow the Path of Shabd. Only then will the omnipotence of Shabd or Nam dawn on us.

Our mind is quick to take on the hue of the company we keep. If we move and mix frequently with

those who gamble, drink or smoke, we also pick up their bad habits. If, on the other hand, we keep the company of devotees of God who are deeply in love with Him, we also start feeling the love for the Lord sprouting in our hearts and an urge to meet Him. It is through satsang[1] that these lovers and devotees of God dispel our doubts and superstitions, pull us away from false rituals and inculcate in us a deep and abiding desire for devotion to Nam.

Saints do not put anything in us from outside. They only activate what is latent in us. The transcendent wealth of Nam is there within us already, kept there for us by the Lord Himself. Saints only point out the way and reveal the method to tap this wealth and connect our soul with Nam or Shabd.

Although fire is latent in every piece of wood, it is neither visible nor can we make any use of it in that state. When, however, we learn the technique of rubbing one piece of wood against another, with requisite skill, the fire is lit. So is Nam, the Divine Melody, resounding in every one, be he a saint or a sinner. It makes no distinction between castes, creeds and nations. We may 'go in' as Sikhs, Hindus, Christians or Muslims. But so long as we do not act on the advice and teachings of the perfect masters and saints, we shall be ever bereft of this wealth of Nam.

"The Lord who created you has kept, in you and for you, this priceless treasure, this wealth of Nam," says Guru Arjan. "The secret of how and where it is to

[1] True association.

be found inside, He has reposed in the Master." Neither our cleverness and intellect, nor our intensive study of scriptures and sacred books, will avail us in finding this Transcendent Wealth within, till we take refuge at the feet of the Master, seek his guidance and follow his instructions.

There is no science and no subject which can be studied and grasped without a teacher's help and guidance. In fact, right from our birth, our mother becomes our teacher. Without her attention, care and affectionate efforts, can a child learn to speak or even walk steadily? When we enter school and college, how many teachers help to enlighten us! After spending two score years to qualify for taking degrees and diplomas, we look to our seniors for guidance and instructions over a considerable period of apprenticeship before we can claim any experience or knowledge. The science of spirituality is much more complex and intricate. Without the guidance of a true Master, it is difficult to move even one step on the inner path. Hence the necessity of seeking the company of a Sat Guru to tread the Path of Nam.

All the worldly religions have their own rites and rituals, ceremonies and formalities, because they are man-made, but Reality, the essence of Truth and the basis of spirituality at the foundation of each of them, is the same. Different saints appeared at different periods of time in different countries. They gave their message in different languages; but all of them, in their own characteristic way, tried to create in us a longing and love for the ultimate Truth.

Guru Nanak calls the Audible Life Stream, 'Dhur Ki Bani' (Sound from the Source), 'Sachi Bani' (True Sound), 'Akath Katha' (Unspeakable Tale), 'Hari Kirtan' (Divine Melody), 'Shabd' (Word or Sound), and 'Nam' (God's Name). Hindu saints describe this Reality as 'Ram Nam' (God's Name), 'Ram Dhun' (Celestial Music), 'Nirmal Nad' (The Pure Sound), 'Divya Dhun' (Divine Sound). Muslim saints refer to it as 'Kalma' (Inner Sound), 'Ism-i-Azam' (The Greatest Name), 'Bang-i-Asmani' (Sound from the skies) or 'Kalma-i-Illahi' (Voice of God). In the Bible, it is called the Word or Logos. We should leave these words alone and only look for what it actually is, and what is treasured within us. Guru Amar Das emphasizes this point when he says: "Within thy body is Nam; thou searchest without. Nam thou canst not thus obtain; utter waste is thy effort." Those who strive to find Nam outside their own selves are toiling like a bonded laborer who works, toils and sweats the whole day but gets nothing in return.

If we have misplaced or lost something in our house, we can find it only by a careful search within the house. How can we ever hope to find it by looking for it in the streets outside? Saints and sages constantly remind us that Nam, the celestial symphony, is not to be found outside; it is right there within us, in our very being.

The spiritual journey to get at this Treasure of Nam, begins from the soles of our feet and ends at the top of our head. It has two stages — one, up to the eyes, and the other, above the eyes. The seat of the soul and

the mind in our body is at the point which has been variously called 'Til,' 'Shiv-Netra,' or the 'Divine Eye,' 'Nukta-i-Savaida,' 'Third Eye' or 'Single Eye.' The location of this vital center is a little above and behind the two eyes.

Every minute, every second, not looking to its center behind the eyes, our mind runs out into the world through the nine portals of our body — the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, the mouth and the two lower apertures. It does not remain still at the Third Eye, the Tisra Til, even for an instant. And, unless it becomes still and pure, the soul which is knotted together with it, cannot be released from its clutches. We all know that whenever we have to recall something, our hand automatically goes to this position of the third eye, on our forehead, never to our legs or feet. This point is vitally connected with our process of thinking. Our attention comes down from this point and spreads through the nine portals of the body into the whole wide world. Even while attending spiritual discourses, our mind goes on thinking, sometimes about our children, at other times about our homes and business, about customers in our shop or about the files in our office.

By following the instructions of the Master, we have to collect our scattered attention through Simran (repetition of the five Holy Names) and Dhyan (Contemplation) at the eye center and hold it there. It is only when we vacate the nine portals of the body and withdraw our attention to the eye focus, that we reach the gateway to our real home, the Lord's Mansion. There is an unmistakably conspicuous feature of this

gateway which everyone of us must note and remember. At this gateway is resounding, day and night, that Unstruck Music, that Sweet Melody emanating from the Lord's Mansion. It is there in everybody, be he a saint or a sinner, a thief or a hermit. This Divine Melody knows no barrier — national, political or religious.

Fortunate, indeed, is he who collects his thought-currents at the eye focus. He is bound to hear the Sound Eternal, Voice of Silence or Voice of God. Sages and saints call it the True Word, the True Nam. Why? Because it cannot be seen by our eyes, it cannot be heard by our ears and it cannot be uttered by our tongue. Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, used to call it the "Unwritten Law" and, "The Unspoken Language." Jesus Christ refers to Nam or the Word when he says: "Having eyes, see ye not and having ears hear ye not." Guru Angad, the second in the line of the House of Nanak, sings the glories of this Eternal Word in more or less the same terms:

"To see without eyes,
To hear without ears,
To walk without feet,
To work without hands,
To speak without tongue,
Thus dying while living,
The Mystery of the Word shall be revealed.

And thou shalt meet the Lord."

By connecting ourselves with this Heavenly Music inside us, we can meet our Lord and Maker, whom no eyes can behold, no tongue can describe, no ears can

hear. Our physical organs, hands and feet, are of no use for progress on this Inner Path because the way to experience and realize Him is to "die while living." This simply means conscious withdrawal of our attention from the nine apertures of the body and focusing it at the eye center. We all notice when one is about to die, first the feet and then the legs become cold. There, however, still remains a fading spark of life and the dying man shows signs of it by regaining consciousness now and then. When consciousness withdraws completely and irrevocably to the eye level and ultimately leaves the body, it is declared that the man is dead. That is why saints call the process of conscious withdrawal of the mind and soul currents to the Third Eye as "dying while living." But in this case, the 'silver chord' is not severed.

All the names by which we devotedly remember our Maker, such as God, Allah, Radha Swami, Wahi-Guru etc. are Varnatmak names, that is, they can be written, spoken and read. There are many countries in the world and currently there are a number of languages. People, out of love and devotion, remember God by many different names, just as a mother, swayed by her gushing love for the child, calls it by many different names. Words do not adequately express the relationship between the mother and the child; they are only symbolic of the mother's intense love for the child. Likewise, the devotees and lovers of God remember Him by innumerable names, which are but symbols of their real relationship. Guru Gobind Singh has used over a thousand names, for God in the 'Jaap Sahib.' The masters ultimately declare Him as the nameless one, because He really has no name, though He will answer

to whatever name we remember Him by, in our love and devotion. The True Name, The Eternal and Imperishable Word of God, however, is quite different. It is the Ḋhunatmak Name whose praise and glory saints and sages have sung through the ages. It is this Eternal Name or 'Nam' which has created the universe and sustains it.

Nam or God's Name, according to Guru Arjan, is the source of everything. In the 'Sukhmani' or 'Psalm of Peace' he has elaborated this point beautifully:

"All creatures live by the Name.
The Name supports the universe and its parts,
The skies and the nether regions,
The cities and houses,
And those that people them.
It is the urge towards Nam that inspired
Scriptures like the 'Vedas,'
the *Smritis* and the *Puranas*,
And keeps men engaged in listening to them,
and thinking and meditating on them.
It is the Name which has been saving men
when they listen to it with attention.
When by the mercy of God man is
attached to the Name,
He is lifted up to the greatest heights of
spiritual bliss.[1]"

The Power that created the universe cannot be the spoken word of man. Every spoken word or name, by

[1] The Psalm of Peace; page 80; canto XVI; hymn 5.

which we remember the Lord, can be traced in history for its age and origin. It may be a hundred years old or it may be five hundred years old. Some may be even two to three thousand years old. What happened before that is all shrouded in mystery. But the True Nam or Shabd, whose glory every saint sings, is the Supreme Creative Power, the glory of which is manifest all around us. Guru Nanak affirms :

> "From Shabd all creation takes its birth,
> And it is in Shabd that it disappears
> At the time of dissolution."

Huzur Maharaj Baba Sawan Singh Ji used to explain how, at the time of Dissolution, earth dissolves in water, water is dried up by fire, fire is consumed by air and air is swallowed up by ether. There is total darkness. You might wonder how Shabd can create the universe. Let us not forget that this body of ours is also made of the five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Which is the power that holds these five elements together with all their mutual incompatibility? And which is the power that keeps them in motion day and night? It is our soul, just a ray of Shabd, and it is because of this ray, that we are pulsating with life. When this power, this soul, this tiny ray of Shabd, is withdrawn by the Lord, life slowly ebbs out and motion ceases in spite of the five elements of the body still being there. Just as the soul, as a prime mover, maintains us as living entities, Shabd sustains and maintains the spheres of the universe in their musical orbits.

According to the Bible, God created the universe by the Word. Sages and seers of ancient India also recorded in the Vedas that the universe came into being by the power of 'Akash-Bani' (The Celestial Sound). The Koran claims that the 'Kalma' is the creator of the entire universe. It is the same Reality, the same Supreme Power, whether it be called Kalma, Word, Akash Bani or Shabd. Call it by whatever name you like, there need be no controversies over the words. Our aim should be to discover and connect ourselves with this Music of the Spheres, the Audible Life Stream.

As pointed out earlier, this Divine Music is resounding in all of us, in saints and sinners alike, with the most captivating melody. Below the eye center, it is all a play of the senses and sense objects. It is the Tenth Door which is actually the place from where one can start hearing the Unstruck Music. It is constantly resounding at this point. That is why Guru Nanak exhorts: "Close the nine doors of thy body and enter the tenth for emancipation," because from there the Divine Music has such a pull that it takes one away from the magnetic fields of Mind and Matter. The teachings of the saints are scientific in nature. Whatever they say has a rationale and an appeal.

Regarding the pathway to God they say, "this body is a castle; and if you want to enter it for getting the wealth of Nam, then you must first try to find its gateway. As long as you cannot locate the gateway and as long as it is not opened to admit you, it is not possible to enter the castle." Likewise, if you want to enter the Lord's Mansion, you must find the door first. And

which is that door? It is the Third Eye. And how can we open it? By Simran and Dhyan. This is what Jesus Christ meant when he said, "seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." The masters explain, therefore, that withdrawing our thought currents from the nine apertures of the body is like giving a knock at the eye center and making an effort to open the Gate. What path do we find there for moving in? The path of Nam, the Nam which brings salvation and eventually enables us to merge in Him.

Saints describe the glory and grandeur of Shabd in scriptures and sacred books. By studying them, we come to know the why and wherefore of Shabd practice. But this mere study by no means leads us to salvation. Salvation comes by practising what we read. Books on medicine contain prescriptions for curing various diseases, but we cannot get rid of diseases merely by reading these prescriptions. By merely studying the railway time table, we do not reach our destination. The time table only gives us information about timings of departure and arrival of trains, names of stations on the way and the fare we have to pay. Sitting at home, if we keep on poring over the time table the whole day, we know where we will be at the end of the day. But if, according to the information gathered, we go to the station, buy our ticket and take our seat in the train, before long we can hope to reach our destination. It is this vital distinction between Reality and its description which we often overlook.

We believe that salvation lies in reading scriptures, sometimes even having them read for us by others.

Surely, salvation cannot be had by proxy. If we ourselves were to carefully read the teachings of saints and masters and try to imbibe their message, we might come to realize our weaknesses and shortcomings. Perhaps as a result, there may be an awakening, a gnawing inside us to get rid of our failings and faults. Moreover, if by reading or listening to these scriptures we at least become aware of the techniques and methods which will put us on the Path, it will mean something. Actually, we indulge in these things merely as a ritual or a rite. In other words, we want to buy salvation on the strength of the purse, forgetting that it is practice, and practice alone, of the given technique, which matters. Guru Nanak highlights the futility of a mere study of scriptures most emphatically thus :

> "If you were to read with every breath, every day of the month and every month of the year, for the whole of your life, understand very carefully that there is only one thing that would ultimately count, and that one thing is your ability to contact Shabd through concentration of attention at the eye center. If the soul is not united with Nam, a lifetime stands wasted for naught."

It is like churning of water; how so long we may do it, butter is just a dream. But that does not mean that one is to give up the study of scriptures and sacred books. What is to be remembered is that this study is only our means, not the end.

We can achieve success in Nam Bhakti, i.e. the Path of Nam, only if we are motivated by His love and

nothing else. Our desire to meet Him has to be pure, untainted and unsullied. Our worship of the Lord is not to be for the worldly tinsel. We are not to worship Him because we wish some wordly desires to be fulfilled. Some of us wish to be blessed with children, others to acquire social status and recognition in the national, political or religious sphere, still others to succeed in business ventures or to amass wealth. This is not the way to worship him. In short, love for the world and love for God go ill together. Guru Amar Das tells us that the sole aim and purpose of Nam Bhakti is to meet God because we love Him and wish to live in Him. Unless our love and devotion for Him is pure and absolutely free from the taint of worldly desires, success on the Path will forever elude us.

People generally worship God as they worship the snake. They carry no love for the snake in their heart. They worship it only because they fear the snake and wish to be spared its venomous bite. Our prayers to God are not to be born out of fear of one thing or the other. We may be afraid, for example, that our business may fail, our children may turn wicked or that we may suffer from ignominy or disgrace in society. This is not the way to adore Him, to pray to Him. The basis of our worship should be love, and not fear. Our heart must be full to the brim with pure, true and earnest love for Him. We must be imbued with a burning desire to meet Him, to be one with Him, to merge in Him. In short, we should want Him because we cannot live without Him; we should not ask for any worldly gifts from Him.

Guru Amar Das tells us that we must surrender ourselves completely to Him and live in His will. By "living in His will" he means that we must love and worship Him with complete devotion and total surrender, cheerfully accepting what is ordained by Him.

"What if you make me a king,
I will not be exalted.
And how do I lose,
If you make me walk with a beggar's bowl?"

The sea gull, nesting on a ship on the high seas, has no other haven but the ship. Fly whither it will, it cannot but return to the ship finally for rest and refuge. Can we seek refuge anywhere except at the Lotus Feet of the Lord? To live in His will, therefore, means merely that we accept gratefully whatever He, in His judgment, bestows on us. If our prayers are tainted and laden with our desires and cravings, we cannot escape re-birth to have them fulfilled.

The Lord is the Supreme Giver who is never tired of bestowing His gifts. It is only we mortals who get tired of receiving them. With whatever desires we approach Him, whatever gifts we beg of him, He will grant them and will give us our next birth in an environment where we can satisfy those desires to our heart's content. A stage is reached, however, when tired of worldly objects and pleasures, almost sick of ephemeral pursuits, we start asking for God Himself from God, and, in His infinite grace, He grants our prayer because it comes from the heart and ushers us into His fold.

To illustrate, take the example of a child who is sent by the parents, with its nursemaid, to play in the park. The nursemaid looks after the child very lovingly. If the child gets bored and is restless, she makes every effort to revive its interest in its surroundings. She tells fairy tales, gives toys to play with and offers sweets to divert the child's attention. As long as the child is engrossed in the amusements provided by the maid, the parents go about their household chores peacefully. But when nothing attracts the child any more and it starts crying, the mother finds it hard to stand the string of tears running down its cheeks. She comes running to the child, takes it in her lap, caresses it and hugs it to her bosom.

In this toy shop of the world, our position is not very different from the child's. As long as we are absorbed in the dancing shadows and whirlpools of pleasure, we are oblivious of the Lord and the Lord also leaves us alone. It is only when the spell of illusion is broken and the glittering allurements of this world have lost their charm for us, that we turn to God, as the child turned to its mother. When the creation ceases to have any attraction for us and we begin to long earnestly for the Creator, He also, in His Supreme Love, showers His blessing and Grace, and lifts us unto Himself. Let us not, therefore, worship the Lord with a string of desires and longings around our neck. This string is endless. No one has ever had his fill, nor will anyone ever have.

We make long-drawn-out plans to fulfill our desires and achieve our ambitions of material success and worldly glory, little knowing that death may pounce

upon us when we least expect it and put an abrupt end to all our plans. We never pause to think that our life span is running out, that we are at the end of our tether. We daily witness friends and colleagues being overtaken in this rat race by the messengers of Death. Even so, the consideration of the length of life span needed for our plans to mature and our desires to be fulfilled, never seems to weigh with us.

Who is responsible for engendering these endless desires and ambitions of ours? It is our mind. And whom do we turn to for their fulfillment? To God. Isn't it indeed a pity that instead of telling our mind to behave, to learn to live in the Will of the Lord, and to mould itself to accept what He is pleased to send us, we pray to God and entreat Him to go by the wishes of our mind. Whom are we thus worshiping, the mind or the Lord? Guru Amar Das impresses upon us, therefore, that the only way to succeed in joining our consciousness with Nam, is to worship God as selfless seekers, and not as lovers of the mind, but as lovers of the Lord.

When a pure, exclusive and intense love for the Lord is awakened within us, our inner spiritual faculties of seeing and hearing start functioning. With the inner eye, we see the Eternal Flame and with our inner ear, we listen to the enrapturing music of the Divine Melody. Salvation, now, is ours for the asking and literally beckons to us. The power of our soul for inner vision is called *nirat* and the power to hear with our inner ear or catch the Celestial Music is called *surat*. With progress on the inner Path, *surat* starts catching the inner sound of the Divine Current, or Nam, and *nirat* its

radiance. With the help of the Celestial Sound, we are able to determine the direction of our True Home, and with the help of the effulgent Light we are able to follow the Path leading to it. Thus, set on the Spiritual Path, we make progress, stage by stage, and reach our True Home, Sach Khand.

To illustrate, suppose while out for an evening walk, we may have strayed rather far from the Dera without realizing that the shadows are lengthening and it is getting dark, so dark, indeed, that we cannot find our moorings. Under such circumstances, we would like to stand still and try to catch any sound coming from the Dera—hooting of a siren, ringing of a bell or someone singing a hymn. Any of these sounds will help us to fix the direction of the Dera and we will know whether we have to push on or turn back, whether we have to turn right or left. The next problem is to fight the darkness and avoid pitfalls and swampy patches on the way. This becomes easy if we have a torch or even a matchbox. We thus see that both sound and light come to our rescue and help us to return safely to the Dera.

This is precisely the state we find ourselves in while treading the spiritual path within. Having strayed from its original home millions and millions of years ago, the soul got lost and has forgotten her way back home due to the heavy and blinding veil of ego. The Lord, in his compassion, has provided both sound and light in each one of us, to guide us back to His Mansion. Catching the Celestial Sound, we are able to determine the direction of our Home and, aided by the Divine Light, we complete, slowly but surely, our spiritual

journey back to the Lord's Mansion. That is why saints dwell on the glory of Shabd in their teachings and speak in such loving and devotional terms about its two manifestations, the Celestial Sound and the Divine Light.

While a lamp or a candle cannot survive a breeze and goes out if either the oil or wick is used up, this Divine Light cannot be snuffed out by wind or rain. This is the Flame, says Kabir, the mere sight of which purifies our mind and burns away all the dross gathered by it during the ages. This Flame, which lights the path leading to our original home, keeps burning within us, ever and always, unlike any lamp or candle of this world. It needs no wick; it needs no oil. Out of this Flame rise the strains of the Celestial Melody, unsurpassed in their sweetness and effulgence. Lucky indeed is he who is blessed with a glimpse of this Flame in all its glory and radiance and who listens to the Divine Melody of Shabd. Such a one in whom the Flame is manifested sheds his love for the world. Its glitter wears off and the dazzling spell of its charm no longer holds him. He turns towards God with his heart brimming with love and devotion.

Christ conveys the same truth in the Bible when he says: "The light of thy body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Paltu sings the glory of this Flame thus:

"There is an inverted well in the sky, within
which burneth a lamp.
Wherein burneth the lamp, without oil and
without wick.

For all the twelve months and six seasons
it burneth day and night."

In describing his experience, Paltu calls the upper part of the head as an "inverted well," because, compared to an ordinary well, it is placed upside down. Swami Ji Maharaj also affirms:

"Concentrate thou and, thus collected,
Seat thyself at the eye focus.
Duality is now left behind;
Fix thy sight in the Flame Eternal!"

Swami Ji tells us that once we succeed in withdrawing our consciousness from the rest of our body to the eye center, we shed all feelings and notions of "duality" and enter the world of unity, because, he says, the mere sight of this purifying Flame inspires in us identity with the Great Universal One. That is why this Flame forms the subject matter of the teachings of all the saints who sing in praise of the Light and Sound emanating from it.

We can well realize now why all places of worship temples, gurdwaras, mosques and churches are always lit up with lamps or candles, and resound with musical notes. It has, perhaps, never occured to us to ask why all religious places have their precincts lit up with lamps or candle light, and have their corridors resounding with conch or bell-like notes. In fact, all Saints and Masters emphasize that the human body is the only true temple, the only true mosque, the only true gurdwara and the only true church, and that it is in this house of true worship that there burns day and night the Eternal Flame and

there reverberate the echoes of the Divine Music. The pity of it is that we do not 'go in' and search for this 'Radiant Light' and 'Melodious Music' but delude ourselves by having these artificial lights and sounds in our places of worship.

It may also be remembered that it is the load of karma that is keeping us in this prison house of "eighty-four" and we suffer the constraints of form. Look at our present state. After every death, the messengers of Death produce us before Dharam Rai[1], who takes into account our unfulfilled desires and wishes and, accordingly, decides where and when we have to be born again. We are not yet rid of the shackles of one body, when the sheath of the next one is already there to confine us. Hardly do we enter the new body when the dread of death, the inescapable end, again begins to stare us in the face. Like branded habitual criminals, we are fettered and shifted, as it were, from one cell of the prison house to another.

Let us calmly consider what exactly is responsible for keeping us in this endless cycle of birth and death. It is our karmas, our attachments, our desires. Guru Amar Das suggests a potent remedy. By devotion to Nam, he says, we break the spell of illusion and go beyond the reach of the law of Karma, never to return to this world. Worldly lures and temptations fail to create a ripple in the mind and to disturb it in its

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[1]King Judge, Divine Accountant, who administers reward or punishment after death according to the karmas of the souls.

detachment. God alone is in our eyes and on our lips, every time and all the time, and there is room for naught else except Him in our hearts. We rejoice that the bonds of form are broken for ever.

Guru Amar Das stresses another very useful and important aspect of the path of Nam. He advises us that we should be humble and meek in thankfully accepting the grace, the blessings and the boons which the Lord may shower on us in His love and affection for us. Under no circumstances should we make any cheap or vulgar display of the gifts bestowed by Him in His munificence. In fact, if we preserve this wealth carefully, without any show of vanity, the measure of its flow from Him will become more and more bountiful. On the other hand, if we are misled into an arrogant display of the miraculous powers that accrue to us through the practice of the Sound Current and dissipate His favors by performing miracles to earn name and fame, He may withdraw His grace, and this flow may well be cut or stopped by Him. If this advice is ignored, it may be too late to repent. Those, he says, who appreciate the glory and grandeur of the wealth of Nam and keep it safe in the innermost recesses of their heart are the the blessed ones and they attain supreme bliss at the Lotus Feet of the Master.

Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh used to compare the role of satsang in the life of a seeker to the protective fence around a fertile field. If there is healthy and luxuriant crop in the field, the predatory animals will always be out to despoil it and the petty thieves to plunder it. Wise farmers, therefore, always protect

their fields with thick and strong fences. Likewise, a host of selfseekers gather around a true devotee and through sycophancy and make-believe devotion, tend to rob him of his merit, as humming bees rob a flower of its nectar. Satsang, the company of Masters and Saints, provides the impregnable shield against this risk.

A discriminating seeker should devote himself to the path of Nam for the sole purpose of God-realization and not for the display of his powers. Miraculous powers have to be kept at arm's length, and the performance of miracles shunned like poison. Huzur Maharaj Ji used to illustrate the point by comparing a discriminating seeker to an experienced jeweler. If, per chance, the jeweler came by a rare diamond, he would appreciate the real worth of his find and would carefully safeguard it against loss or theft. He would keep it in a locked treasure chest and would hold the key close to his bosom. He would not trust even his wife or his children with the key, lest they might lose or misplace it or, through sheer ignorance, throw away the diamond itself. If the same diamond had fallen into the hands of a potter, he, in his ignorance, would simply have hung it around the neck of his donkey as a decoration.

Why do we have to keep a close watch on this precious gem that is Nam? We should do so, because this boon is too invaluable, too priceless, to be bought with all the treasures of this world put together. Even more important is the fact that it is only the Masters, the lovers and the devotees of the Lord, who can bestow this wealth.

Guru Amar Das finally concludes that all search for the Lord in the solitude of forests, in the silence of mountains or in the dark depths of caves is futile. Nor is the Reality to be found in temples, mosques, churches and gurdwaras. It is not entombed in the scriptures, nor is it perched on the Himalayan peaks. It can only be found within us and nowhere else. By following the dictates of the mind, we are behaving like mad men, lost in rites and rituals. We go on pligrimages; we bathe in holy rivers and sacred tanks. We study and recite scriptures and hymns; we don ochre-colored robes or smear our bodies with ashes and we delude ourselves that salvation is now round the corner. Nor can it be ours if we pierce the lobes of our ears and wear heavy rings. Surely it has no partiality for matted hair or shaven heads. Are we so naive as to believe that the Lord can be taken in by our rituals, dress or appearance? We never look for Him within ourselves, where alone we can find Him.

"Enter within and take your bath in the Celestial Stream of Shabd. Only then will love for the world yield to love for the Lord," says Guru Amar Das. It is only this bath which will rid us of the world's lure and its temptations and make us worthy recipients of the Divine Grace. We fondly hope that baths in the holy rivers and tanks on auspicious days will wash away our sins. Howsoever clean the water and howsoever bold the assumptions regarding its potential, it will certainly wash our body clean of dirt, but never of sins. The karmic dust gathered over the ages can only "be washed away with the waters of Nam." We take a dip into the Divine Waters of Life as slaves of the mind and

emerge as earnest devotees and seekers of Truth and Reality. So to say, from ravens, we are converted into swans. If we could discard our karmic coverings by taking a bath in rivers and tanks, surely nothing could be simpler and easier to attain deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

Devotion to Nam is the only way to worship the Lord. There is no other way. We shall be deluding ourselves if we think there is one. Guru Amar Das goes further to assert that if we follow any yoga, technique or path other than that of devotion to Nam, we are bound to come to grief and, when the final curtain is rung, we shall repent that we wasted our precious life in idle pursuits. Why this remorse, why this repentance? Because without catching the Celestial Current and merging in it, no one can enter the kingdom of God.

Kabir beautifully brings home to us how Nam purifies the mind and helps us to lighten our karmic load.

> "Just as a pile of hay is reduced to ashes by a tiny spark, so are all your sins consumed the moment Nam enters your heart."

He further extols the glories of Nam when he tells us,

> "Even a leper with a dripping skin is blessed if he attaches himself to Nam. He is preferable by far to a person who does not remember the Lord, even though he be wearing golden robes."

He goes on to urge us,

> "With every breath of your life, gather this wealth of Nam which is the only means of redemption. Failing this, you will be a picture of remorseful grief when the end draws near."

Swami Ji Maharaj stresses the same point when he says,

> "Go and attach yourself to the Unstruck Melody within. Way there is none without Shabd to break the fetters of the body."

Jesus Christ also observes in the Bible:

> "Worship of Spirit is worship of the Father,
> No other worship pleases the Father."

It will thus be seen that all the saints and sages, past and present, are emphatic in their assertion that devotion to Nam is the only means of redemption and no other religious practice can take us into the Court of the Lord. Led by God's own voice on the Path lit by the Divine Light, only our determination and perseverance must bear fruit.

The practice of Shabd Yoga actually bestows on us more than all the merit that can be won by other disciplines like austerities, recitations, charities and rituals taken together, for, none of these traditional methods of worship can take us far. Obviously, no recital is better than having the Name of God on our lips all the time;

no repetition outweighs the *simran* of His Name; no worship is higher than the contemplation of the Radiant Form of the Master; no music is superior to that of listening to the Divine Melody within and no renunciation is greater than turning our back on the lures and charms of the world after having tasted the Divine Nectar of Nam.

The path in no way demands of us to leave our hearth and home or to renounce wife and children. In short, we have to live in the world and yet not be of the world, and, with a stout heart, learn to brave its wily ways, its bumpy paths and its dark alleys. The lotus plant has its roots in water, but when it blooms, the flower keeps above the water's surface. The duck revels in water for hours and yet flies off at will with its wings dry. Learn the secret from the lotus and the duck, says Guru Nanak. They are models to emulate.

We can cross the vast but dismal ocean of this world of mind and matter, unsullied and untainted, if we merge ourselves in the Divine Current. Having strayed from our home in Sach Khand, we are living like tresspassers in this world which is not our real home. Guru Amar Das warns us that if we fail to reach even the gate (tenth door) of our True Home, we shall be denied the wealth of Nam and, as a result, we shall have to suffer punishment in the manner of a tresspasser who is caught in alien premises. It other words, if, in our foolishness, we follow the dictates of the mind and try to satisfy its desires and cravings by 'going out' into the world instead of 'going in' to gain entry into the tenth door, we miss the unique opportunity to attach ourselves with the

Audible Life Stream and are mercilessly thrown into the prison of "eighty-four" with all its agonies. In whatever form we are encased, our lot is uniformly one of pain and suffering. Guru Amar Das tells us that only those who reach their True Home obtain everlasting joy and peace. They break the cycle of birth and death and thereby escape being repeatedly tortured by the messengers of Death.

And with whose grace do we gain admission in the Court of the Lord? Surely not by our own efforts. Alone, we are nothing. We can never traverse this Inner Path on an unchartered terrain all by ourselves. We owe it all to the immeasureable grace of the Master who showers his blessings on us by joining us with the Nam, removing all our doubts, and pulling us out of the quagmire of rituals, symbols and superstitions. It is our Master who puts us on the right path and awakens in our mind abiding love and devotion for the Lord. Blessed with his infinite Grace, we seek, we knock and we find.

Guru Amar Das in the end observes that all beings in the world are helpless puppets in the hands of destiny and there is nothing at all which they can accomplish with their own efforts. Those on whom the Lord wishes to shower His mercy and grace are bestowed the gift of the human form. And out of this lot, he draws the attention of the marked ones to Himself. These are the souls whom He, in His Supreme Bounty, wishes to deliver from doubt and delusion, rites and rituals; whom He wishes to call back to His Mansion by joining them with Nam and Shabd.

Trapped in the snare of Illusion our mind is woefully entangled, assailed as it is by doubts of all sorts. We are ever looking out through the window of the mind, our attention riveted to the glamor and glitter of the world. Not until He himself showers His grace and blessings on us mortals, shall we turn inwards and will love for Nam and Shabd sprout in our hearts. We of this world are completely blind, as it were, while the Lord is all-seeing and all-perceiving. How can a blind man catch hold of one with sight, unless the latter calls him or guides him by the hand?

Ultimately, it is Lord's will which is supreme. It is His will that is 'done on earth as it is in heaven.' Man is helpless. Not till He Himself showers His blessings, are we put on this Path. Not till He Himself wants to lift us out of the mire of doubts, are our minds pure and clear of cobwebs. Not till He Himself takes us into His fold, are we redeemed through the Master's grace. And that grace is showered on us through the gift of devotion and love, which eventually tunes us to Nam. Therefore Guru Amar Das says:

> "Devote yourself to Nam, O Nanak,
> if you seek honor in His court."

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